

DECISION MEMO
MAN-MADE HOLE STREAM MAINTENANCE
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
PETERSBURG RANGER DISTRICT
TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST
PETERSBURG, ALASKA

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this project is to re-excavate a channel that connects Donahue Creek, a tributary of Blind River to the pond at Man-Made Hole recreation area.

Man-Made Hole is a large gravel borrow pit used during the construction of the Mitkof Highway in the 1960s. Following construction, the tributary was diverted into the pit to create a pond that provides additional rearing habitat for coho salmon, cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden char, to the benefit of recreational fisherman. In 1992, flow through the excavated channel to the pond was reduced due to a natural landslide upstream which formed a sandbar in the excavated channel. The Forest Service, with support from the Rotary Club and Trout Unlimited, re-excavated the channel with a backhoe and added rock riprap along the excavated stream. Two native spruce logs were buried and anchored at the head of the excavated channel and within the original channel to direct, control, and maintain the desired stream flow to the pond. Currently, the flow into the pond has again been reduced due to natural deposition of sand and gravel in the excavated channel.

The need for this project is to maintain enough flow into the pond to ensure flow at the outlet is adequate to attract fish to the pond. The inside bend of the excavated channel will always act as a deposition environment for sand and gravel, the amount of which is largely dictated by the frequency of high flow events. Continued periodic maintenance is anticipated into the future at this location to maintain sufficient flow to the pond. Project implementation is subject to available funding and will occur during fish timing windows determined in consultation with Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

The following activities were proposed for this project:

- Using large equipment (excavator, backhoe) to re-establish sufficient flow from the channel to the pond while maintaining flow to the historic channel.
- Re-grading the 69 x 5 meter excavated channel to a surveyed elevation.
- Adding rock or logs to the head of the excavated channel to direct flow into the pond at low flows.
- Replacing or bolstering existing logs located in the tributary channel (Donahue Creek) with longer/larger logs held in place by ballast logs and/or buried into the bank.
- Replacing logs cabled to the banks under the third foot bridge at the outlet of the pond with larger logs with root wads attached to prevent bank erosion that could potentially

compromise the bridge footers.

- Obtaining locally sourced logs/trees for project implementation from a variety of potential locations/sources including a nearby blowdown area, cull wood associated with timber harvest, private individuals or contractors engaged in lot-clearing activity, purchased from timber operators, or from landslide/debris events that provide sufficiently-sized material.
- Adding gravel from the excavated channel to the berm at the south end of the pond (constructed as part of the trail) where water seeps into the porous pond margin eroding the surface under the fourth foot bridge. Water will continue to pass under the foot bridge at higher pond levels.

DECISION

I approve the proposed project, as described above, incorporating the following project design features:

1. A pre-work meeting with contractors will be conducted to review key project design features.
2. Wood collection activities will adhere to standards and guidelines for the LUD in which the cut logs and rootwad trees are collected (USDA Forest Service 2008). Rootwad trees will be harvested according to guidelines established during restoration projects on numerous Tongass National Forest streams (Landwehr 2009). All harvest locations will be rehabilitated with slash following tree removal.
3. Oil pollution prevention and contingencies will be in place. Equipment will be fueled a minimum of 150 feet from the active stream channel. Equipment refueling plans will be considered prior to work commencement (BMP 12.8; 12.9; National BMP Road-10).
4. Equipment access areas used during the project will be rehabilitated to minimize erosion and soil compaction in areas where equipment operates, or where mineral soils are exposed to encourage natural regeneration (BMP 12.17; National BMP Road-2). No roads will be constructed for this project.
5. Areas of bare ground resulting from construction activities will be revegetated using local seed sources or plants (BMP 12.17; National BMP Veg-2).
6. Petroleum-based hydraulic fluid in heavy equipment is replaced with vegetable-based hydraulic fluid to protect water quality in the event of a spill. Spill containment kit will be kept on site (BMPs 12.8; 12.9; National BMPs AqEco-2; Road-3).
7. In-channel construction activities are subject to fish timing windows and will be determined in consultation with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Habitat Division as per the Title 16 Memorandum of Understanding (BMPs 14.6, 18.3; National BMPs AqEco-2; Road-3).
8. Equipment use in the live stream will be kept to a minimum. To the extent possible, equipment will work from the stream bank and gravel bars, accessing the active flow channel when necessary to perform detailed site-specific construction (BMPs 14.6, 14.14; 18.3; National BMPs AqEco-2; Road-3).
9. Equipment will not be stored, maintained or repaired within the stream channel or floodplain (BMP 14.14; National BMPs Road-9; Fac-2).
10. An erosion/sediment control plan will be created prior to project construction as part of

the construction contract. Erosion control devices such as silt fence will be used to protect water ways from sediment impacts (BMP 14.5; National BMP AqEco-2).

11. All equipment will be cleaned prior to being brought on site to reduce the potential for invasive plant introduction (BMP 14.14; National BMP Fac-7). During implementation, ensure that clothing, footwear, materials, equipment and tools used in the project area are free of invasive plants (National BMP Veg-8).
12. Areas suitable for staging construction materials and equipment will be identified on site prior to implementation (BMPs 12.8; 14.14; National BMP Fac-2).
13. If previously undiscovered sensitive or rare plants are encountered prior to or during implementation, protect the population and avoid disturbance in the area containing the population (and similar habitats in that vicinity). Notify a Forest Service Botanist/Ecologist immediately to evaluate the population and recommend further avoidance or mitigation measures.
14. Consider implementing restoration activities from June to early July to minimize the potential for transporting viable invasive seed sources to the restoration site.

Furthermore, a Forest Service fisheries technician, fisheries biologist, or hydrologist will be on-site during the implementation of the proposed activities. These individuals will inspect and monitor construction activities to ensure proper implementation and take appropriate action to reduce or eliminate negative effects to resources.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The applicable category of actions is identified in agency procedures as 36 CFR 220.6(e)(7), as described in FSH 1909.15 Chapter 30, Section 32.2 (7), "Modification or maintenance of stream or lake aquatic habitat improvement structures using native materials or normal practices." This category of action(s) is applicable because the work will be conducted within the footprint of previous construction activities at the site, and maintains, replaces, or modifies previously built structures or features.

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

- Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species – Biological Evaluations were completed for sensitive plants, fish, and wildlife. The Biological Evaluations determined that no sensitive species will experience impacts that will cause or contribute to a trend towards federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species.
- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – The project is located within the floodplain of Donahue Creek, a tributary to Blind River. The project will not negatively impact the functional value of any floodplain as defined by Executive Order 11988 and will not have negative impacts on wetlands as defined by Executive Order 11990.
- Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas – The project is not within a wilderness, wilderness study area, or

national recreation area.

- Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas – The project area is not located within an inventoried roadless area or potential wilderness area.
- Research natural areas – The project area is not within a research natural area.
- American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites – The proposed action was reviewed by a Forest Service archeologist. No American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites are present in the project area. Under provisions stipulated in the Programmatic Agreement between the Forest Service, Alaska Region, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the State Historic Preservation Officer, the Forest Service has met its obligations using modified procedures of the 36 CFR 800 review process.
- Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas – The proposed action was reviewed by a Forest Service archeologist. No archeological sites, or historic properties or areas are present in the project area. The archeologist has determined that a finding of No Historic Properties Affected is appropriate for this project. Under provisions stipulated in the Programmatic Agreement between the Forest Service, Alaska Region, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the State Historic Preservation Officer, the Forest Service has met its obligations using modified procedures of the 36 CFR 800 review process.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Tongass National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions in October 2015 and updated periodically during the analysis. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game Division of Habitat will be consulted prior to implementation to determine appropriate construction timing windows for minimizing potential impact to fish. Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service was initiated on October 9, 2015.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This decision is consistent with the Tongass National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). The project was designed in conformance with Forest Plan direction for the Special Use Area Land Use Designation (LUD). The Forest Plan allows aquatic habitat maintenance activities within this LUD.

Endangered Species Act (1973, as amended)

Biological evaluations were completed for threatened, endangered, proposed and sensitive species. There will be no effect on any threatened, endangered or proposed species under either alternative.

Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (1940, as amended)

No bald eagle nests have been documented within the project area. Management activities will comply with 50 CFR 22.26.

ANILCA Section 810, Subsistence Evaluation and Finding

The effects of this project have been evaluated to determine potential effects on subsistence opportunities and resources. There is no documented or reported subsistence use that will be restricted as a result of this decision. For this reason, this action will not result in a significant possibility of a significant restriction of subsistence use of wildlife, fish, or other foods.

Clean Water Act (1977, as amended)

Congress intended the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended in 1977 and 1987, to protect and improve the quality of water resources and maintain their beneficial uses. Section 313 and Executive Order 12088 of January 23, 1987 address Federal agency compliance and consistency with water pollution control mandates. The site-specific application of best management practices (BMPs), with a monitoring and feedback mechanism, is the approved strategy for controlling nonpoint source pollution as defined by Alaska's Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Strategy (ADEC 2013). In 1997, the State approved the BMPs as described in the Forest Service's Soil and Water Conservation Handbook (USDA Forest Service 2006) as consistent with the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Regulations. The BMPs are incorporated into the Tongass Land Management Plan.

The Forest Service issued National Core BMPs in 2012 (USDA Forest Service 2012). The Man-Made Hole Channel Maintenance project would implement the most up-to-date BMP guidance.

Clean Air Act (1970, as amended)

Emissions from the implementation of the Man-Made Hole Channel Maintenance project would be of short duration and are not expected to exceed State of Alaska ambient air quality standards (18 AAC 50).

Marine Mammal Protection Act (1972, as amended)

No marine habitat occurs within the Man-Made Hole Channel Maintenance project area. None of the actions authorized in this project would have an effect on marine mammals.

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) consultation was initiated on October 12, 2015. No comments were received.

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

A Forest Service archeologist has reviewed this project under the provisions of Section 106 and has made a determination of No Historic Properties Affected in the area of potential effect for the proposed project.

Tongass Timber Reform Act (TTRA) of 1990

Forest Plan riparian standards and guidelines apply to the project and no commercial timber harvest would occur because of the proposed action. The design and implementation direction incorporates best management practices (BMPs), and Forest Plan standards and guidelines for the protection of all stream classes.

E.O. 11988 (Floodplains), E.O. 11990 (Wetlands)

The project is located within the floodplain of Donahue Creek and the pond at Man-Made Hole. The project would not negatively impact the functional value of any floodplain as defined by Executive Order 11988 and would not have negative impacts on wetlands as defined by Executive Order 11990.

E.O. 12962 (Recreational Fisheries)

The project is consistent with Executive Order 12962 since it improves the quantity, function, sustainable productivity, and distribution of United States aquatic resources for increased recreational fishing opportunities.

E.O. 12898 (Environmental Justice)

Implementation of this project is not anticipated to cause disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority populations and low income populations because the proposed activities are not expected to cause any effects to human health or result in meaningful adverse environmental consequences.

E.O. 12962 (Aquatic Systems, Recreational Fisheries)

The project minimizes the effects on aquatic systems through project design, application of standards and guidelines, BMPs, and site-specific mitigation measures. Recreational fishing opportunities would be protected, are not expected to be negatively affected, and would likely be enhanced.

E.O. 13007 (Indian Sacred Sites)

Tribal governments or their authorized representatives are responsible for notifying the agency of the existence of a sacred site. No sacred sites were identified within the project area.

E.O. 13112 (Invasive Species)

Design criteria are included to reduce the potential for introduction and spread of invasive species. The need to treat invasive species presently established would remain.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is not subject to administrative review/appeal.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Implementation of this action may occur immediately.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact:

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Date



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